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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 27, 2009

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HOW DOES THE HOUSE REPUBLICAN BUDGET DEAL WITH SWINE FLU?

TALLAHASSEE, FL --- Amid fears that the world may be entering a global pandemic of swine flu, Florida House Republican leaders are standing behind a proposed state budget that would hinder Florida's ability to fight public health threats.

Swine flu, which has caused numerous recent deaths in Mexico, normally affects only pigs. Twenty cases of swine flu have been confirmed in the United States. No cases have yet been identified in Florida. However, state and county health departments in Florida have announced that they have boosted surveillance for the virus.

Despite the government's reaction to this public health emergency, Florida House Republicans are defending a proposed state budget that would cut the salaries of state employees, including public health workers who would be at the front lines of fighting a pandemic.

More than 12,000 Floridians work in county health departments throughout Florida's 67 counties. They include physicians, nurses, pharmacists, immunologists, and other experts.

“The current outbreak of swine flu is a reminder of the important work of public health nurses, doctors and other caregivers who should be applauded for their vigilance in protecting Floridians from serious illnesses,” said House Democratic Leader Franklin Sands. “During the current economic crisis, House Republicans are acting carelessly in threatening pay cuts and job losses for hard-working public health employees.”

Swine flu has many of the same symptoms as the regular flu virus and can be mild, but people may want to seek treatment by a physician if they experience trouble breathing, dizziness or severe vomiting.

For more information about the swine flu, visit the Web site of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

<http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/>

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